

## **Progress Report of First 90 days in office by Webb County Judge Danny Valdez**

Since taking office at the beginning of the year, the Webb County Commissioners and I have worked diligently in promoting positive changes for our Court, our employees, and especially, our taxpayers.

One of my first agenda items was the changing of the time that our Commissioners Court meetings were held. Our meetings are scheduled on the second and fourth Monday of every month. The meetings were being held at 1 p.m. On January 9, 2007, the Court unanimously approved to have our first meeting of each month at 9 a.m. and the second meeting at 5:30 p.m. This would allow the public to have a better opportunity to attend our meetings and participate in county government by voicing their opinions.

When I ran for County Judge I was very outspoken about the fact that we needed to improve the relationship between the County and the City. Both our governments work for and represent the same people. Because of this, I asked the Court to support the creation of a County-City Projects and Programs Coordinating Committee. Mayor Raul Salinas, on behalf of the City, spearheaded the same effort and helped form the City-County Government Issues Committee. Both groups are comprised of members of both governmental bodies who have resolved to work together on matters of mutual interest and benefit to the residents of our community such as the fifth international bridge, a new rail bridge and a secondary water source.

Realizing that 2007 marked the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session in Austin, the Court moved very quickly to form the first ever Webb County Legislative Committee. This group which is chaired by Commissioner Jerry Garza and includes Commissioner Rosaura Tijerina, put together a legislative agenda to present to our delegation in Austin. With the help of our new legislative consultants, Johnson & Johnson, the committee put together several key points of legislation which are currently working their way through the Texas Senate and House with the help of Senator Judith Zaffirini and Representatives Richard Raymond and Ryan Guillen. These legislative agenda items focus on the establishment of a countywide civil service system for our employees, request for authority to construct a rail bridge, legislation to allow Webb County to amend colonia plats for the connection of utilities and Webb County's authority to lease with other governmental entities.

The Webb County Youth Village Project has been underway now for several months and its construction has continually progressed. A projected completion date of April 2008 has been set and we are trying to secure additional funding sources to incorporate the housing of other components to the project such as the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) and a drug treatment and rehabilitation facility for our at-risk youths.

Another important accomplishment by the Commissioners Court was the recent \$4.8 million dollar package that was awarded to Webb County by the Texas Water Development Board. These monies are earmarked to fund the completion of water and sewage improvements in Rio Bravo and El Cenizo, a decade-long project. This funding will pay for the replacement of 25,800 linear feet of waterlines in Rio Bravo, the replacement and reconstruction of some existing streets and driveways in Rio Bravo, the installation of 15,300 linear feet of water lines and 52 fire hydrants along Espejo Molina Road between the cities and improvements to the water treatment plant.

The Court is also moving forward on the building of a new morgue for Webb County's first chief medical examiner, Dr. Corinne Stern, who began work for the county at the beginning of the year. We anticipate that the new morgue will be completed within the next twelve to fifteen months. Dr. Stern is also promoting her services to the surrounding counties in the hopes of establishing a regional medical facility. This will help provide revenues for the county to pay for our new morgue.

At the beginning of April the Court will also be hiring a new public information office who will be responsible for promoting Webb County and informing the public of our progress in all of our endeavors. Serving as a liaison for the county, the public information officer will be responsible for planning and organizing a public relations program, giving interviews and making response calls to the media and representing the county at public and government meetings and hearings.

Commissioner Rosaura Tijerina and I were recently appointed by the Governor of Texas to the South Texas Regional Review Committee. The role of each member is to (1) establish procedures for the review and scoring of applications for the Community Development Fund and Community Development Supplemental Fund; (2) review and score all such applications within our region; and, (3) hear appeals that originate at the regional level. Each committee member participates in the process to determine that regional priorities are being met and to ensure that the scoring of applications are conducted in a fair and equitable manner while identifying the needs of the region.

Finally, as Webb County Judge I will continue to support, encourage and promote the children of our community through the projects and programs that I created while Justice of the Peace. Our special student of the month program continues to enjoy success while my annual fishing derby for physically challenged children is now celebrating its thirteenth year. I know that, with the support of the court, these programs will continue to thrive.

As you can see, the Webb County Commissioners and I have been very active in the first quarter of the year. It is my intention to continue to provide these reports throughout the year in an effort to better inform our constituents of our progress.

**I thank you all for your support.**